

IN THE DRAWINGS:

Please replace Drawing Sheets 1/31-4/31 with the attached Replacement
Drawing Sheets 1/31-4/31.

REMARKS

Applicants request favorable reconsideration of the subject application in view of the preceding amendments and the following remarks.

Initially, Applicants note that an initialed copy of the Form PTO-1449 submitted on December 11, 2001, has been returned, but that the European Search Report listed thereon has not been indicated as having been considered. Applicants hereby request that another copy of the Form PTO-1449 be returned to Applicants, indicating the Examiner's consideration of the European Search Report.

Claims 3-7 and 17-21 are presented for consideration, with claims 3 and 17 being the independent claims. Claims 8-15 and 22 were previously withdrawn as drawn to a non-elected species.

By this Amendment, claims 1, 2, 8-16, and 22 have been canceled without prejudice or disclaimer. Additionally, claims 3, 7, 17, and 21 have been amended. Support for the amendments can be found in the application, as originally filed. No new matter has been added.

The title and page 15, line 3, of the specification stand objected to. Amendments are presented above to obviate these objections. Favorable consideration is requested.

Figures 1-4 also stand objected to. Replacement Drawing Sheets are being submitted herewith in which Figures 1-4 are labeled as "Prior Art." Accordingly, withdrawal of the objection is requested.

Claims 2 and 3 stand objected to as lacking consistency. As discussed in more detail below, claim 2 has been canceled and the objection thereto is moot. Claim 3 has been amended along the lines suggested by the Examiner to overcome the objection thereto. Withdrawal of the objection to claim 3 is requested.

Applicants note that claims 17-21 have been allowed and that claims 3-7 would be allowable if amended to overcome informalities. In keeping with this indication of allowable subject matter, and as discussed above, Applicants have amended claim 3 along the lines suggested by the Examiner and to improve its form. Consequently, claims 3-7 are seen to be in condition for allowance.

Claims 7, 17, and 21 also have been amended herein, merely to improve their form. These amendments are not being made for reasons related to patentability, and these claims are still believed to be allowable.

The Office Action entered rejections of claim 1 under 35 U.S.C. §102(e) over U.S. Patent No. 6,563,536 (Rashkovskiy) and of claims 2 and 16 under 35 U.S.C. § 103 as unpatentable over Rashkovskiy in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,925,875 (Frey). Claims 1, 2, and 16 have all been cancelled herein, and the remaining claims are seen to be in condition for allowance for the reasons noted above. The foregoing actions have been taken without prejudice or disclaimer of subject matter, and without conceding correctness of the rejections, but rather strictly to obtain an earlier allowance and to expedite issuance. In particular, it is Applicants' current intention to file a divisional application, to pursue the subject matter of the rejected claims.

Applicants submit that this application is in condition for allowance.

Favorable reconsideration and an early Notice of Allowance are requested.

Applicants' undersigned attorney may be reached in our Washington, D.C. office by telephone at (202) 530-1010. All correspondence should continue to be directed to our below listed address.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Michael J. Didas", is written over a horizontal line.

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